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H PLEASE PASS TO CONGRESSMAN HINOJOSA

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SUBJECT: SHEIKHA MOZAH SUPPORTS IDEA OF CONGRESSIONAL FIELD
HEARING AT EDUCATION CITY

(SBU) KEY POINTS

-- Sheikha Mozah, wife of the Amir and head of the Qatar Foundation, told Ambassador on February 9 that she supported the idea of a congressional field hearing at Education City to highlight the role that the six U.S. universities there play "not only for us, but for America."

-- She noted that most American visitors to Qatar "know more about the military base than the 'education base,' whereas of the two, this is the base that is more important to your future."

-- The Sheikha, in an apparent reference to educational endeavors in the United Arab Emirates, warned Ambassador that "some" were seeking to turn American education into a commodity for sale, but American education must preserve the "noble quality" that Education City was seeking to promote.

(SBU) COMMENTS

-- Embassy strongly supports more congressional interaction with Education City, not only to learn more about this massive, multi-billion dollar investment in the region's future, but also to help identify and guide opportunities for more branch campuses of U.S. educational and scientific institutions in Doha.

-- We think the idea of a field hearing, first proposed by a CODEL led by Rep. Ruben Hinojosa in November, 2008, which focused on Education City, is a good one: bold and novel.

-- Embassy is sending a letter to Congressman Hinojosa informing him of Sheikha's Mozah's support, expressing Embassy support for the concept, and asking him if he, as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Higher Education, is still interested in conducting in Doha an overseas field hearing on Education City.

END KEY POINTS AND COMMENTS

1. (SBU) Following up on the November visit of a congressional delegation led by Congressman Ruben Hinojosa, which focused on the six U.S. university branch campuses at Education City, Ambassador called February 9 on Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Misned, wife of the Amir and Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, the organization that oversees Education City. Ambassador raised the Congressman's idea of exploring the possibilities of conducting a congressional field hearing at Education City to highlight for Congress and the American public the massive undertaking of these universities.

12. (SBU) Sheikha Mozah said it was a good idea that would also allow the Qataris to share their experiences in launching this endeavor. "We were the first," she explained, "and many thought we were crazy for making such a huge investment." A congressional hearing would be an excellent way for Qatar "to convey certain messages to Americans." Most visitors to Qatar, she lamented, "know more about the military base than the 'education base,' whereas of the two, this is the base that is most important" to America's future.

13. (SBU) One message that she would like to get across is that "American education is noble, and needs to be kept noble, not turned into a commodity for sale." Universities are not "shopping malls," she said, but "we are very worried by what we see happening around us as people rush to try doing something similar. We want to brag about Education City because what we are doing here is unique."

14. (SBU) Sheikha Mozah explained that Education City was also undertaking exciting initiatives "that you don't even see in America," such as creating a consortium among all six universities, and offering a university/business platform with strong support at the Qatar Science and Technology Park. Discussions about bringing in an American community college were also underway, the Sheikha said, and that she would update the Ambassador as soon as these were finalized.
LeBaron